

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council

General Meeting

April 4, 2019

Attendees: Council Members: Lynn Rothman, Mike Topping, Kathy Fox, Elisabeth Cichonski, Beth Behrend, Brian Hillard, City Councilman William Reynolds (Liaison to the EAC)

Community Members: Ed Gallagher (Gadfly Blog, former Lehigh Professor), Brian Nicas (Curtiss-Wright EHS Manager), Ben Guthrie (Civil Engineer), Jane Cook (BBFW & Monocacy Watershed), Summre Patricella (Food Co-op), Jackie Cook (Lehigh Univ.), Brian Treston (Lutron), Ginny Sciorra (Palmer Township Environmental Steering committee)(PTESC) , Denise Yora (Bethlehem resident), Roseanne Amano (BBFW), Anne Gastinger (resident), Josie Miserendino (resident), Elke Rockwell (resident),

Call To Order at 7:07 PM.

Motion to approve the March minutes made by Kathy seconded by Beth. Minutes approved unanimously.

Citizens comments: None.

Chair's comments & amendments to agenda: The City website is still under construction. Minutes will be posted on the Facebook page @BethlehemEAC. The EAC will not be able to update our page until July.

Lynn announced that the Birdtown Coalition meeting is Saturday May 4th at Universalist Church at 424 Center Street in Bethlehem. Roseanne added that the annual plant sale will be the weekend before Mother's Day. Beth volunteered to represent the EAC at the meeting.

Board comments: Mike Topping said there is a fishing competition on the Lehigh on May 25th in which you win up to \$20,000 for the biggest fish among other prizes.

Brian Hillard reminded the group about the EcoChallenge which will take place April 3rd- 24th. Brian encouraged attendees to visit the website and Facebook page for more information.

Climate Resolutions will be held through the Sierra Club to discuss topics on food, transportation, electrification and more on April 14th at the Ice House from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM.

Brian H. is going to the EAC annual conference on May 18th.

An environmental film "the Human Element" will be viewed on Thursday, April 18th at Lehigh University.

Committee Reports:

a. Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife

Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (BBFW), a subcommittee of the EAC, presented a letter about a dozen city-owned properties that the City would like to sell. Most agreed that the properties needed to be analyzed on a case by case basis. Very small pieces of land do not make sense as a standalone property and may not be considered green spaces, but there is a need and a benefit to preserving green space in urban environments. It was suggested that the EAC could recommend that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of these properties be dedicated to environmental organizations within the City. Mike T. suggested that the City restrict uses for some of these properties. Roseanne said one of BBFW's

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goals was to improve the look of some of these properties. All agreed the letter should be revised to include these suggestions.

b. Waste Reduction Committee

Beth went to the City Council meeting at Town Hall in March to present the plastic bag ordinance. She has been contacted by the Morning Call and the Bethlehem Press, and interviewed with Lehigh Valley Live.

Beth wants to start a drawing contest in schools to get artwork to put on the reusable bags, but is still working out funding for the initial purchase of bags. Art will be submitted from elementary to high school aged students.

Brian suggested partnering with the Sierra Club and reaching out to local school districts and PTAs. Private entities like charter schools and private schools were also suggested. Ginny (PTESC) suggested contacting the supermarkets.

c. Energy Committee

i. Proposed Solar Ordinance

Brian Nicas researched the solar ordinance in Watertown Massachusetts. The ordinance requires that new buildings with a building footprint greater than or equal to 10,000 square feet perform a solar assessment and where possible install solar panels, with exemptions for historic buildings, insufficient load capacity, etc. This would require developers to put solar panels or if not possible, perhaps green spaces, on their roofs.

Bethlehem is retrofitting some parking garages. The EAC could suggest adding solar panels which will eventually make City money. There are so many buildings with unused rooftop space that would be perfect for solar. Funding is available, but we need to look for grants. Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) is a financing structure that allows commercial entities to get funding for energy efficiency upgrades through their property tax bill. Therefore, the loan is tied to the property, even if the ownership changes. All council members were in favor of proposing the solar ordinance.

ii. Electric vehicle cost analysis

Brian H. pointed out that the Bethlehem Parking Authority currently uses Jeeps, an inefficient vehicle, in an inefficient manner by idling it when checking a parked car's plates. He drafted a cost analysis and found there to be dramatic savings in fuel and fuel costs if the City switch to EVs. Councilman Reynolds suggested contacting Mike Alkhal (Department of Public Works) to start the conversation about this. Lynn agreed to send Brian's EV Cost Analysis to Mike and invite him to our May EAC meeting to discuss. Elisabeth will post the EV Cost Analysis to Facebook once we send this out.

External Committee Reports:

a. City Council: None.

b. Planning: Next Thursday is the Planning Commission meeting about Martin Tower. Plans are up on the city website. Members of the EAC will review the plans for the Martin Tower property tomorrow morning (4/5) at 8:15 AM.

c. Zoning: None.

Climate Action Plan

Councilman Reynolds had good conversation with Mike Alkhal (Public Works) who is working on putting together a Request for Proposal (RFP) for consultants to draft the Climate Action Plan. He welcomes input from the EAC.

The third annual Monocacy Park Day will be Saturday, May 11th 10 AM- 2PM at Illick's Mill.

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Bethlehem Food Co-Op Earth Day Festival and Art Fair is on April 27th, 2019.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:37 PM.